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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 SANTO DOMINGO 001823

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AND PLD

REF: SANTO DOMINGO 1697

¶1. (SBU) This is no. 29 in our series on the Dominican presidential election:

LEONEL'S V.P. - LOW KEY AND PLD

Leonel Fernandez's March 16 announcement that Rafael Albuquerque would be his vice-presidential running mate surprised nearly everyone. It could prove to be an astute choice. The patrician Alburquerque, former secretary of state for labor and a long-time member of the PLD, also served in a PRSC administration and is a respected expert in labor law. Fernandez deliberately passed over more powerful PLD figures expected to compete for the party's presidential nomination in 2008, including former candidate Danilo Medina and former Vice President Jaime David Fernandez Mirabal. Albuquerque is low key, regarded as honest and capable. He is likely to play a solid second fiddle to concertmaster Leonel, with no dissonances. Typical comment around here: "He won't add many votes, but will alienate none."

Fernandez waited until 6 pm on the final day before candidacies had to be declared. Many believed that he would announced PRSC veteran Carlos Morales Troncoso. Common wisdom that Morales Troncoso would serve somehow as a "bridge" to Washington; when Morales Troncoso didn't make the cut, common wisdom reversed itself to declare that Washington hadn't found Morales Troncoso acceptable. Morales told the papers that yes, Leonel had offered him the post and he had simply turned it down.

Rafael Alburquerque served as PRSC President Balaguer's labor secretary, 1991-96, and continued with that portfolio in the

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Fernandez administration until 2000. He was one of three authors of the current Dominican labor code, enacted in 1992, and during his nine years in the cabinet established a reputation for integrity and moderation. Respected Catholic University (PUCMM) dean Flavio Dario Espinal writes, "Alburquerque has the best credentials to help in processes of mediation and negotiation of social conflicts, and to strengthen the government's capacity to communicate with the common people generally." This could come in handy; the currently ruling PRD if in opposition might mobilize its militants and affiliated unions to promote strikes as it did during the previous Fernandez administration. Alburquerque has cordial relations with most political leaders.

Born June 14, 1940, Alburquerque was a founding member of the Dominican Students Federation and the PLD. In the 1978 and 1982 elections, he served as number two on PLD founder Juan Bosch's ticket, but the irascible Bosch later expelled him from the party. Alburquerque established his own Party of the Dominican People (PPD), and in the 1996 election gave his support to the National Patriotic Front which carried Leonel Fernandez (PLD) to the presidency.

Alburquerque has four decades' experience as a labor lawyer and law professor and has authored several books in the field. He received a doctorate in law from the University of Paris in 1965. In 1988, he went to the United States as an international visitor (IV) grantee.

2, (U) Drafted by Bainbridge Cowell.

¶3. (U) This report and the rest of our electoral series are on the SIPRNET at <http://www.state.sgov.gov/p/wha/santodomingo/> along with exte